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ABSTRACT

This publication contains classroom-tested teaching ideas. For grades K-4, "'Blessed Ted-fred': Famous Fathers Write to Their Children" uses American Memory for primary source letters written by Theodore Roosevelt and Alexander Graham Bell to their children. For grades 5-8, "Found Poetry and the American Life Histories Collection," teachers find the interviews in the American Life Histories to be rich resources for creating poetry. For grade 9-12, "Using the American Memory Timeline to Learn about Civil War and Reconstruction, 1861-1877" provides a model for how the American Memory Timeline can be used in U.S. history classes the model is adaptable to any era covered in the timeline. In the feature article, "Evaluating Historical Sources," James R. Giese reminds teachers to consider issues of reliability, bias, and accuracy as they teach students to use primary sources. The "Tech Tip" section contains "Printing Documents for Offline Use by Students." (BT)

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ED 464 013

The Source:

A Newsletter of Practical Teaching Ideas for American Memory Users

January 2002 Issue #3

Using Text Documents from American Memory

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"Blessed Ted-fred": Famous Fathers Write to Their Children

Elementary teachers tend to favor the visual images in the American Memory collections. Yet even among the text documents, there are gems that can be used to help elementary students experience the fun of working with primary sources.

Theodore Roosevelt http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/presp:@field(NUMBER+@band(cph+3a53299))

One pair of sources that even very young students could work with are letters from Theodore Roosevelt and Alexander Graham Bell to their children. Roosevelt's letter, found in the Words and Deeds in American History (http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ mcchtml/corhome.html) collection, was written when Roosevelt was chair of the Civil Service Commission and was working in Washington, DC, while his family was in New York. The Letter with illustrated fable, Theodore Roosevelt to Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., 11 July 1890)http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mcc:@field(DOCID+@lit(mcc/045)) was sent to Roosevelt's three-year-old son. Accompanying the letter is an illustrated story about a pony and a cow who set out to see the world but are frightened by a bear and decide never to run away again.

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Elsie Bell Grosvenor and Marian Bell Fairchild, November 13, 1887 http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=magbell&fileName=068/06800102/bellpage.db&recNum=0) as written to Bell's two daughters; Elsie was nine at the time and Daisy (Marian) was seven. Bell wrote from Martha's Vineyard. Perhaps because his children were older, Bell's letter was longer, but it, too, contained a drawing. The letter can be found in the Alexander Graham Bell Family Papers collection http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/bellhtml/bellhome.html

These documents could be used in a language arts lesson on letter writing or in a social studies unit on families. A teacher might introduce the lesson by asking students if they have ever received a letter from a family member. Who wrote the letter? Why? Did the letter contain pictures?

If students cannot read the letters, the teacher might read them aloud, with the drawings from the letters projected on an overhead. Transcriptions of the letters could

also be prepared for students who read but are not yet familiar with cursive writing.

Possible discussion questions include the following:

- Who wrote the letter? (Theodore Roosevelt; Alexander Graham Bell)
- Who received the letter? (Ted-fred, Roosevelt's son; Elsie and Daisy, Bell's daughters)
- Why did the writer send this letter? (In both cases, the fathers were away from home and writing to their children to stay close, express love, etc.)
- How are the two letters alike? (Both are from fathers to children, both mention activities the fathers and children enjoy doing together, both include drawings, both express love.)
- Do you think little "Ted-fred" was younger or older than Elsie and Daisy? Why? ("Ted-fred" was younger; his letter is shorter and has more pictures.)
- Which letter do you think is most interesting? Why?
- What do these letters tell us about families? (Family members love each other; they stay in touch when they are apart; parents try to entertain, educate, and provide guidance to their children.)
- What do these letters show us about letter writing? (The top of a letter tells where and when it was written; the letter begins by saying who it is to and ends by saying who it is from; letters may be handwritten and include pictures.)

As a follow-up, students might write letters to family members who live far away or write letters to their parents, asking their parents to write back in response.

Found Poetry and the American Life Histories Collection

For a moment
The room became as black as night
Then
For an instant
Here came a ray of light
We all walked out
Into the storm
Be brave
Feel scared
Don't give up
Cold
North wind
Blew us half a mile south
We let our friends go
And continued
Alone
Animals
People
Lost
To the Storm
All while trying to find
Their way
Home

This poem is an example of student-created found poetry based on the American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1940 (http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/wpaintro/wpahome.html). The document that inspired this student was The Blizzard of 1888 (http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/wpa:@field(DOCID+@lit(17120802)). The lesson that engaged the student in the process was created and taught by Alison Westfall and Laura Mitchell, American Memory Fellows in 1998. Their lesson is titled Enhancing a Poetry Unit with American Memory (http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/lessons/98/poetry/poem.html).

What is found poetry? A found poem uses words and phrases from another source, generally some kind of everyday written material (e.g., letters, newspaper headlines, lines from a television program, advertisements) but combines them in new ways. Tom Hansen says of the process of creating found poems, "Most found poems begin their lives as passages of expository prose. Their intended purpose is to feed easily digestible information to the reader. Nothing could be less poetic. But suddenly poetry is discovered embedded within the prose. The discoverer is someone alert to the possibilities of irony, absurdity, and other incongruities."*

Middle school teachers in particular seem to find American Life Histories and found poetry to be a perfect match. While Alison Westfall and Laura Mitchell recommend using their lesson after students have studied a considerable amount of published poetry, Kathleen Isaacs, a teacher at Edmund Burke School in Washington, DC, reports success with found poetry activities as an introduction to a poetry unit or as an English class accompaniment to a history unit. For Kathy, the message for students is a simple but powerful one:

"Students see what happens when you take out all the unnecessary words--strong writing."

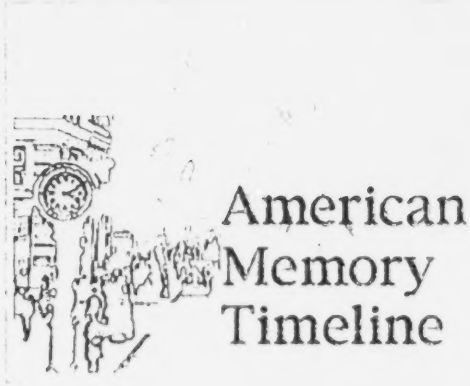
The American Life Histories make an excellent starting point for found poetry because they use rich and varied language to tell human stories. Alison and Laura do, however, caution teachers that "poets and teachers of student poets would be well advised to approach them with the respect due any human being, and to use them for the good purposes of understanding history and creating art. This caution is necessary because many of the Life Histories will seem outrageous to students because they depict colorful, often difficult lives and may be told in the most vernacular terms. Bad grammar, too, and dialects have their place in poetry; teachers may need to work on this with their students."

Alison and Laura provide detailed instructions for introducing the found poetry unit; we recommend that teachers check out their lesson plan and adapt it for their purposes. For example, Laura Wakefield, a teacher at Neptune Middle School in Kissimmee, Florida, reports that her students made a quilt of family stories as part of an oral history unit that incorporated found poetry. They began by looking at the Life Histories collection and making found poetry from selected life histories. Students then interviewed a family member, transcribed the family story they were told, and made a found poem from that family story. The found poem of their family story was then typed on a computer, flipped so that it read like mirror writing, and photocopied. The photocopy was placed face down on the cloth quilt square, and a cotton ball soaked with turpentine was dabbed over the paper. The photocopy page "magically" transfers onto the cloth.

If teachers try the Enhancing a Poetry Unit with American Memory, we would be happy to include some student-generated poems in future issues of *The Source*.

* Tom Hansen, "Letting Language Do: Some Speculations on Finding Found Poems," *College English* 42 (1979), p. 281

Using the American Memory Timeline to Learn about Civil War and Reconstruction, 1861-1877



The American Memory Timeline http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/features/timeline/index.html consists of sets of documents selected to be of particular use to precollegiate teachers and students. The sets are arranged by chronological period. Each document included (many are excerpted) is linked to the complete primary source in American Memory from which it has been drawn. The excerpts are thus also intended to help students and teachers delve more deeply into the primary sources provided online by the Library of Congress.

This article provides one model for how the American Memory Timeline can be used in U.S. history classes. In the lesson, students use the sets of documents on the Civil War and Reconstruction, 1861-1877 (http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/features/timeline/civilwar/civilwar.html) to learn more about that critical period in U.S. history and to develop their ability to analyze primary source documents. If possible, the class should spend the first period online. If this is not possible, the teacher will need to make packets for the seven small groups. Each packet should contain copies of the handout provided with this article, the American Memory "Analysis of Primary Sources" handout, plus the documents related to one of the topics in the American Memory Timeline for the Civil War and Reconstruction period. These topics are:

- The South During the Civil War
- The North During the Civil War
- African-American Soldiers During the Civil War
- Civil War Soldiers' Stories
- The Freedmen
- Reconstruction and Rights
- The Travails of Reconstruction

An interesting excerpt from one of the documents can serve as a "grabber" for the lesson. For example, the teacher might read the following excerpt aloud to students, explaining that it is from a report written in February 1865 and asking them to listen and try to figure out what the writer is talking about in this excerpt.

Cabins, sheds, unused houses, were appropriated, roughly repaired, fitted with a cheap stove for the winter, a window or two for light and air, a teacher sent to the locality, the neighboring children gathered in, and the school started. . . .

. . . it frequently occurs, that in a desirable locality for a school, it is impossible to obtain boarding for the teachers. In such cases, a weather-proof shelter of some kind--very poor at best--is obtained, some simple furniture provided, and a teacher sent who is willing to undergo the privations--often hardships-of boarding herself, in addition to the fatigues of her school.

Compelled to live on the coarsest diet of corn bread and bacon; often no tea, coffee, butter, eggs, or flour; separated by miles of bad roads from the nearest provision store; refused credit because she is a negro teacher, unable to pay cash because the Government is unavoidably in arrears; subjected to the jeers and hatred of her neighbors; cut off from society, with unfrequent and irregular mails; swamped in mud--the school shed a drip, and her quarters little better; raided occasionally by rebels, her school broken up and herself insulted, banished, or run off to rebeldom; under all this, it is really surprising how some of these brave women manage to live, much more how they are able to render the service they do as teachers.

Despite all the efforts of our agents, the assistance of the Provost Marshals, and the devotion of the teachers, many of these schools would have to be abandoned but for the freedmen

Glimpses at the Freedmen
http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/aaodyssey:@field(NUMBER+@band(cph+3a33775

themselves. These, fully alive to all that is being done for them, gratefully aid the teachers from their small store, and mount guard against the enemy of the schools, whether he be a rebel, a guerilla, or a pro-slavery professed unionist skulking behind the oath.

Excerpted from "Startling revelations from the Department of South Carolina, and expose of the so called National Freedmen's Relief Association," from the collection, African American Perspectives: Pamphlets from the Daniel A.P. Murray Collection, 1818-1907.

Students should be given time to speculate on what kind of schools the writer is discussing before being told that they were schools for freed slaves in the South. This excerpt is from one of the many primary sources students will be grappling with in this lesson. If necessary, the teacher may wish to remind students that primary sources are actual records that have survived from the past, such as letters, photographs, articles of clothing, reports, and so on. Secondary sources

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are accounts of the past created by people writing about events sometime after they happened. Students might then be asked to give examples of primary and secondary sources about the time period under study, the Civil War and Reconstruction period. The teacher can then introduce the idea that many primary sources about this and other periods of our history are available online from the Library of Congress, often called "America's Library." Students will be working with sets of these documents to practice their skill in analyzing primary sources and learn more about the Civil War and Reconstruction. If feasible, the teacher may provide students with a brief overview of the American Memory web site.

With students, the teacher should review the handout on "Analysis of Primary Sources" from the Learning Page, either online or in print. Students will be using the "Questions for Analyzing Primary Sources" as they analyze a series of documents on the Civil War and Reconstruction.

Students should then be organized into seven small groups, with each group assigned one topic in the "Civil War and Reconstruction, 1861-1877" section of the American Memory Timeline. Students can work with the documents online or in paper copy. The handout provided with this article gives instructions for group work.

After groups have presented their reports, a general discussion could focus on the following questions:

- Was any document completely believable? Completely unbelievable? Why or why not?
- Did some types of primary sources seem less believable than others? Why?
- If you found contradictory information in the sources, which sources did you tend to believe? Why?
- How were the generalizations that the various groups made alike and different? What do you think accounts for the differences?

As a follow-up, students could explore the remainder of the "American Memory Timeline" or some of other the American Memory collections relevant to the period. Some relevant collections include:

- African American Perspectives: Pamphlets from the Daniel A. P. Murray Pamphlet Collection
- Civil War Maps
- First-Person Narratives of the American South, 1860-1920
- Selected Civil War Photographs
- We'll Sing to Abe Our Song: Sheet Music About Lincoln, Emancipation, and the Civil War

- The South During the Civil War
  http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/features/timeline/civilwar/southwar/south.html
- The North During the Civil War
  http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/features/timeline/civilwar/northwar/north.html
- African-American Soldiers During the Civil War
  http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/features/timeline/civilwar/aasoldrs/soldiers.html
- Civil War Soldiers' Stories
  http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/features/timeline/civilwar/soldiers/soldiers.html
- The Freedmen
  http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/features/timeline/civilwar/freedmen/freedmen.html
- Reconstruction and Rights
  http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/features/timeline/civilwar/recontwo/recontwo.html
- The Travails of Reconstruction
  http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/features/timeline/civilwar/recon/reconone.html
- African American Perspectives: Pamphlets from the Daniel A. P. Murray Pamphlet Collection
  http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/aap/aaphome.html
- Civil War Maps
  http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gmdhtml/cwmhtml/cwmhome.html
- First-Person Narratives of the American South, 1860-1920
  http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award97/ncuhtml/fpnashome.html
- Selected Civil War Photographs
  http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cwphtml/cwphome.html
- We'll Sing to Abe Our Song: Sheet Music About Lincoln, Emancipation, and the Civil War
  http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/scsmhtml/scsmhome.html

Group Assignment Sheet

Use the information from the Library of Congress's "Analysis of Primary Sources" (http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/lessons/psources/analyze.html) and the "Questions for Analyzing Primary Sources" to analyze the documents your teacher has assigned to your group.

After you have analyzed all of the documents in your document set, discuss in your group which sources you believe are most and least reliable and why. Identify any contradictions among the documents and decide how you might resolve these contradictions.

Next, create a generalization about primary source documents based on your analysis of the document set. A generalization is a statement that applies across many cases. Thus, a generalization about primary source documents would apply not only to the documents you analyzed but to other primary sources as well. For example, a generalization about primary source documents from the "Analysis of Primary Sources" is "every source is biased in some way."

Finally, make at least one generalization about the Civil War or Reconstruction period based on the documents that you read. An example from the "Overview" of the Civil War and Reconstruction section of the "American Memory Timeline" is "The problems of reconstructing the Union were just as difficult as fighting the war had been."

Prepare a two- to three-minute presentation of your group's work, focusing on the generalizations you made and how your documents support them.

Analysis of Primary Sources

Historians analyze historical sources in different ways. First, historians think about where, when and why a document was created. They consider whether a source was created close in location and time to an actual historical event. Historians also think about the purpose of a source. Was it a personal diary intended to be kept private? Was the document prepared for the public?

Some primary sources may be judged more reliable than others, but every source is biased in some way. As a result, historians read sources skeptically and critically. They also cross-check sources against other evidence and sources. Historians follow a few basic rules to help them analyze primary sources. Read these rules below. Then read the questions for analyzing primary sources. Use these rules and questions as you analyze primary source documents yourself.

Time and Place Rule

To judge the quality of a primary source, historians use the **time and place rule**. This rule says the closer in time and place a source and its creator were to an event in the past, the better the source will be. Based on the time and place rule, better primary sources (starting with the most reliable) might include:

- Direct traces of the event;
- Accounts of the event, created at the time it occurred, by firsthand observers and participants;
- Accounts of the event, created after the event occurred, by firsthand observers and participants;
- Accounts of the event, created after the event occurred, by people who did not participate or witness the event, but who used interviews or evidence from the time of the event.

Bias Rule

The historians' second rule is the **bias rule**. It says that every source is biased in some way. Documents tell us only what the creator of the document thought happened, or perhaps only what the creator wants us to think happened. As a result, historians follow these bias rule guidelines when they review evidence from the past:

- Every piece of evidence and every source must be read or viewed skeptically and critically.
- No piece of evidence should be taken at face value. The creator's point of view must be considered.
- Each piece of evidence and source must be cross-checked and compared with related sources and pieces of evidence.

Questions for Analyzing Primary Sources

The following questions may help you judge the quality of primary sources:

1. Who created the source and why? Was it created through a spur-of-the-moment act, a routine transaction, or a thoughtful, deliberate process?

2. Did the recorder have firsthand knowledge of the event? Or, did the recorder report what others saw and heard?

3. Was the recorder a neutral party, or did the creator have opinions or interests that might have influenced what was recorded?

4. Did the recorder produce the source for personal use, for one or more individuals, or for a large audience?

5. Was the source meant to be public or private?

6. Did the recorder wish to inform or persuade others? (Check the words in the source. The words may tell you whether the recorder was trying to be objective or persuasive.) Did the recorder have reasons to be honest or dishonest?

7. Was the information recorded during the event, immediately after the event, or after some lapse of time? How large a lapse of time?

FEATURE

Evaluating Historical Sources

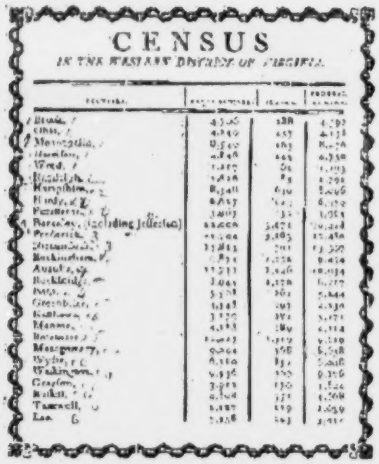
By James R. Giese
Consultant, Library of Congress Adventure of the American Mind Project Faculty
University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, Colorado

The historical record is highly selective, often biased, and always incomplete. Most of what happened in the past is undocumented, and not every document produced is preserved for future use. Much of what is available has been accumulated by accident. Furthermore, much historical evidence is actually incidental to the situations described. On the other hand, some of the available records are left because of the self-conscious action of historical actors. Many people keep journals and write diaries, autobiographies, and business and personal letters, some of which are written explicitly for posterity and the historical record.

Some primary sources are more useful than others, depending, of course, on what question the historian seeks to answer. In making preliminary judgments about the usefulness of primary historical sources, historians usually adopt the principle of immediacy--that is, the closer the source is in time and place to an episode under investigation, the better the source.

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt delivering his inaugural address

Every source is biased in one way or another and must therefore be scrutinized skeptically and critically. Every individual piece of evidence (source) must also be carefully scrutinized and cross-checked with other evidence. The historian must think about who is producing any given source and what his or her purpose was in producing it. The relevance of this stricture is probably most obvious with respect to sources that try to persuade the reader or attempt to justify an individual's actions: political speeches, party platforms, newspaper editorials, autobiographies of famous persons. Yet it applies equally well to other types of sources.



CENSUS

IN THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA.

Census in the Western district of Virginia

As an example, consider the U.S. federal census of population, virtually without peer among national government censuses as a long-term time series of statistical information. However, the census is not as comprehensive as its compilers, funders, or users would wish. Some people do not voluntarily participate in the census--believing, for example, that their privacy will be violated or that they should not participate because they are foreign nationals. Others simply forget to fill out or return the forms. Some make errors when completing the forms, although many of these are now caught by the Census Bureau. When census enumerators go out into the field, some people are difficult to find, their neighbors cannot supply accurate information, or, in our highly mobile society, people have recently moved. Sometimes enumerators fear going into certain neighborhoods because they are reputed to be dangerous.

Historically, these problems were arguably even greater because the census was conducted by amateurs who may have been political appointees or have had little training. Census canvassers were sometimes paid by the entry (the more people they found, the more money they earned), which encouraged overcounting. The point is that all sources, even one of such generally high quality as the U.S. federal census, have their limitations as well as their virtues.

If students are to use primary sources--and we believe they should--they must be taught to deal with issues of reliability, bias, and accuracy. A lesson I have developed and used to teach about source evaluation is available on the Learning Page: The Historian's Sources. (http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/lessons/psources/pshome.html)

As we grapple with original sources, we can hardly escape the conclusion that these documents tell us, in contemporaries' own words, about real people who faced real problems and issues in real situations. We discover that they, like ourselves, made decisions and solved problems with less-than-perfect information at their disposal; they did not know, any more than we can know, what the outcomes of their actions or solutions might be. We also learn that these people, no matter how different they may be in some respects, were not totally unlike us either. We also discover that human history is not inevitable; it is ultimately about humans making choices.

TECH TIP

Printing Documents for Offline Use by Students

Having students work with documents online is often impossible--but access problems should not prevent teachers from using documents from American Memory.

Text documents in particular can easily be printed and copied to create document packets for student groups. Most text documents can simply be printed by hitting the print button on your web browser's toolbar. Alternatively, you can access print commands from the file menu. The documents in the American Memory Timeline print particularly cleanly, as they have been excerpted and formatted especially for use by teachers and students.

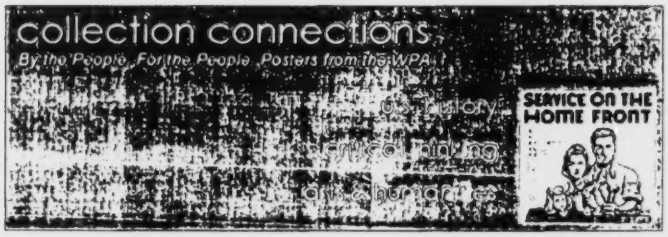
Sometimes, however, you may want or need to print an image of an original document rather than a transcription. A good example is the letter from Theodore Roosevelt to his son discussed in the "Teaching Ideas: K-4" section of this newsletter. The bibliographic record for this document can be found at http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mcc:@field(DOCID+@lit(mcc/045)). To view the page image, click on the thumbnail showing the document. To print this image without the other type on the page, right click on the image (Mac users: hold down the mouse button). A menu will appear. Select the "View Image" option. Your image will now appear alone on a new page. Print this page as you would any other web page and you have a nice clean copy of the document for student use.

Collection Connections

Collection Connections provide teachers with valuable curriculum links, collection by collection. Formerly dubbed "Learn More About It," Collection Connections now have, according to Library staff, "a new look and *joie de vivre*." Each Collection Connection provides ideas for linking the specific collection to U.S. history, critical thinking, and arts and humanities. Among the newest Collection Connections available are:

- Built in America: Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, 1933-Present
  http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/collections/built/index.html
- By the People, For the People: Posters from the WPA, 1936-1943
  http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/collections/poster/index.html

Collection Connections have not yet been completed for every collection. Completed Connections can be accessed from the Collections section of the Learning Page (http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/collections/index.html). If a Connections feature has not yet been completed for a collection, the page provides a Summary of Resources. See the Aaron Copland Collection for an example. (http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/collections/copland/index.html)



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Copyright on the Web

"If it's on the Internet, it must be public domain."
"If I found it on a web site, it's free for the taking."

The quotes above, the first from an experienced social studies teacher and the second from a high school student, reflect a common misconception about copyright and this new publishing medium called the Internet/World Wide Web. The ease of publishing on the Web, as well as the simplicity with which content from the Web can be downloaded or cut and pasted into a publishing program, has led some users to the false conclusion that material on the web is not copyrighted.

American Memory Fellow Linda Joseph (AKA the Cyberbee) has prepared a Shockwave presentation on copyright issues. Copyright on the Web, accessible through a link on the Activities (http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/activity/index.html) section of the Learning Page, was designed for use by students but also contains information helpful to teachers.

The presentation provides answers to 11 commonly asked questions about copyright, from "What is copyright?" to "What is fair use?" and "Does it matter how much of a song or video I use?" Despite its simplicity--the entire presentation can be read through in only a few minutes--the site skillfully covers the basics. More extensive information about copyright is attached or is also provided on the Learning Page at http://memory.loc.gov/learn/resources/cpyrt/.

Editorial Board

The editorial board is made up of elementary, middle school, and high school teachers and librarians/media specialists who have taken part in the American Memory Fellows program. More information about that program is provided on the Learning page at http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndipedu/amfp/index.html. Current members of the editorial board are:

Mary Alice Anderson
1999 AMF Fellow

Margaret "Gigi" Lincoln
2000 AMF Fellow

Scott Culclasure
1998 AMF Fellow

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